

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

2008 AUDIT

NORWICH CITY PARKS



On behalf of members of the Norwich Society the society's Environment Committee keeps a continuous watching brief on environmental issues in the city, particularly the state of the streets and open spaces, and once a year carries out a detailed audit of a specific area of the city. It was decided that the 2008 audit should be a study of the parks in Norwich and during August the parks on the council list were visited and notes taken on a series of prearranged questions.

Methodology

The citizens of Norwich are very fortunate in having a large number of parks and open spaces across the city, probably more than many people realise. According to council information there are twenty five parks and fifty- five open spaces under the management of the Council.¹ To make the project manageable the survey was limited to the parks

only, however two were omitted: the Jenny Lind Park and Sewell Park, both of which are undergoing local consultations with a view to extensive redevelopment.



Castle Green

The questions asked related to the condition and maintenance of the park and included general impression on arrival; parking and toilet facilities; information boards, provision of litter bins and if they showed signs they are emptied regularly; historical or distinctive features of the park; recreational facilities; state of the

¹ Norwich City Council website.

paths and gardens and the standard of maintenance throughout the park. Note was also taken if the park is locked at night and if there is a keeper or attendant in evidence. It was also decided to see how well the four Sandys-Winsch parks which were restored with Heritage Lottery money have stood the test of time.

Historical Background

Until the early nineteenth century the general population of Norwich was confined to the area within the medieval city walls, and it was only after the 1820s that housing was built outside these walls. Development gathered pace as the population expanded and the old courts and yards were deemed unsanitary, and in 1879 Norwich was considered one of the worst places in England for parks². Though there were private gardens and many churchyards making the city green and pleasant the only public spaces within and outside the walls were Chapelfield, the Castle Gardens and Mousehold³, the latter becoming an official park or recreation ground in 1886⁴. Chapelfield has an interesting history having always been an open space, named after the Chapel of St Mary, founded in the thirteenth century and situated nearby. It has been ploughed land, pasture, an archery ground, site of a reservoir from 1792 until 1854, and finally being laid out as a park in 1877. In 1880 the great Barnard and Bishop Pavilion was erected here, removed in 1948, and sadly all that remains of this building are the sunflower gates at the entrances to Heigham Park and to Chapelfield itself from Chapelfield East. During World War II air raid shelters were dug in the gardens.⁵ As the population spread to the north of the city land was acquired from the Great Hospital Trust at Guildencroft in 1889, and also for what became Waterloo Park. Land for Wensum Park was bought by the Corporation in 1907 but

neither this site nor Waterloo Park site was fully developed until after World War I.⁶ In 1923 The National Playing Fields Association was founded with the encouragement of King George V 'to ensure that everyone had access to quality recreation space close to where they lived'. It was this, together with the need to provide employment for local men during the recession between the wars that led to a great flurry of park building in the 1920s and 1930s in Norwich. Land was bought or leased by the Corporation and in some cases was donated in memory of loved ones, for example for James Stuart Gardens (1922), Sewell Park(1909) and Pilling Woodrow Park(1929). Heigham Park was opened in 1924, followed by Wensum in 1925, Eaton in 1928, Sloughbottom, Mile Cross and Woodrow Pilling in 1929, and Waterloo in 1933.⁷ The driving force behind most of these developments was Capt. A. Sandys-Winsch, City Parks and Gardens Superintendent who was appointed in 1919⁸, and the labour for construction provided much needed work for the unemployed.

Sandys-Winsch was a horticulturalist, trained at Wisley, and subsequently gaining experience working for the Landscape Architect Thomas Mawson. His designs for the Norwich parks were to achieve national acclaim and he was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Landscape Architecture as a result. These designs have given Norwich a unique group of parks with a strong structure of hard landscaping including some fine buildings, playing fields, gardens and much more and all were built by providing work for the unemployed. A full account of Sandys -Winsch and his work in Norwich can be found in A.P. Anderson's book *The Captain and the Norwich Parks*, published 2000 by The Norwich Society.⁹

By the late 1990s many of the buildings and

² Goreham, Geoffrey, *Parks and Open Spaces of Norwich* 1961. Unpublished typescript.

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⁴ Goreham, op. cit.

⁵ Goreham, op. cit.

⁶ Goreham op cit.

⁷ Ishmael, op. cit.

⁸ Anderson, A.P. *The Captain and the Norwich Parks*, 2000.

⁹ Anderson, op. cit.

structures in the parks had fallen into disrepair however a successful application to The Heritage Lottery Fund enabled major refurbishments to be carried out at the four main parks, Eaton, Waterloo, Wensum and Heigham. Today the care of the Norwich parks and open spaces is in the hands of City Care.

Overall results of the Survey.

As will be seen from the following review of the survey Norwich has inherited a superb collection of parks across the city, mostly from the 1920s and 30s but some are more recent such as Bowthorpe and Clover Hill.

- ◆ Almost without exception we found **the maintenance of the parks was excellent**; grass was well cut, paths were clear, equipment well maintained, beds well planted and virtually no litter in evidence. Great credit must go to the City Care team who carry out this task. Surely some of our parks would qualify for the Green Flag Award for Parks and it is hoped that applications will be made.



Eaton Rose Garden

- ◆ Unfortunately there were some areas of concern, though not due to routine maintenance. In 2005 this committee drew attention to the disgraceful state of the Castle Mound above the Castle Gardens. Since then, in spite of continuing pressure from the Society, action is only just beginning. This has been unacceptable neglect of an historic site in the centre of the City and a key tourist area.



Castle Mound

Below the eroded banks the gardens themselves are a sorry sight. Since the redesign following the building of Castle Mall the entrance from Castle Meadow is a cold unwelcoming open space, frequented by youths, often with skateboards, who use the walls, banks and steps for climbing and jumping and trample over everything. In consequence planting and grass do not survive and there is often a lot of litter. This is not how a key city centre site should be. As has been noted in the following report the Castle Green on the higher level does not to have the same problems and begs the question would the Castle Gardens fare better if the design was more intimate and friendly as it used to be?

- ◆ The other park which we felt fell below standard was Mile Cross, though again the overall maintenance was reasonably satisfactory. These gardens are of historical interest and the original design included hard landscaping by Sandys-Winsch.



Mile Cross Pavilion

To the regret of local residents this park was

not included in the Heritage Lottery bid which saved the four larger Sandys-Winsch parks and most of the structures have gone. A local 'Friends' group is doing great work against difficult odds and would like to see it restored to the standard of the other historic parks.

- ◆ In years gone by parks had keepers and we understand that there are attendants in some of the parks some of the time though we only met one during our visits to the twenty four parks surveyed, also community wardens are said to patrol the parks at times.. In spite of this intermitted patrolling vandalism remains a problem in some of the parks. Eaton Park has a part time keeper and also a strong Friends group and it is very noticeable that since the refurbishment conditions in this park have improved very markedly. It would seem that the presence of authority and involvement of the local community does make a big difference to the way the park is treated.
- ◆ A large number of the parks visited have gates and facilities for locking at night though as the attendant at Heigham Park commented nothing will prevent people getting in if they are determined. Sadly so many of the problems are caused by a very small minority.
- ◆ With the exception of the two parks above most of our criticisms were minor. We particularly noted the lack of signage to direct to some of the more suburban parks which were often difficult to find, and frequently we found these parks seemed to be underused even in the summer holidays when we visited. Where notice boards exist contact numbers, when called failed to answer, for example at Waterloo Park. Toilets were just about adequate though those at Mousehold were in a poor state, particularly those by the pitch and putt course, and we noticed several of the good ironwork gates at entrances needed a coat of paint to halt rusting.
- ◆ From 2000 the four main Sandys-Winsch parks had major refurbishment with the help

of money from the Heritage Lottery Fund and we felt that these parks had stood the test of time well though we were disappointed to see the pavilion at Waterloo Park was shuttered and apparently had little if any use now.



Waterloo Park Pavilion

This survey of Norwich parks has been an extremely interesting and encouraging experience for all members of the committee. We now know what a large area of open ground exists within the city though much of it appears under used. The maintenance is so good and there are so many facilities for sports and games of all kinds perhaps the city council should do more to blow its own trumpet and encourage people to use the parks more. The government is encouraging sport and we have the facilities, why not use them?



Harford Hard Tennis Courts

The Norwich Parks

Below are brief site visit reports to each park which are recorded in the numerical order shown on the Norwich City map.

1. Castle Green - Roof of Castle Mall, City Centre.

This is a pleasant open space on two levels with grass and trees, well used by groups of all ages. It is an entirely man made environment since it is built above the Castle Mall car park but in spite of this trees, grass etc. are thriving. There is a small playground for toddlers, seating (some broken) but no ball games allowed. Plenty of litter bins which had been emptied and no litter on the ground. On the upper level are two sculptures, Parrot Head by Bernard Reynolds and Daedalus by Jonathan Clarke which have been defaced by graffiti, in the latter case obscene.



Castle Green Daedalus

There are no toilet facilities in the gardens but easy access to Castle Mall. No information boards about the park but good notices about the Castle at the gates to Castle Bridge and planters of flowers on the bridge. The gardens are pleasant and well maintained. No evidence of attendant/keeper when we visited. These gardens provide a welcome open space for city workers and shoppers and are well used.

Suggestions for improvement - repair of broken seats, cleaning of the sculptures and some path sweeping.

2. Castle Gardens - Castle Meadow, City Centre.

These gardens are formed in the moat of the Castle and as recently as the early 1980s were a well loved place for city workers and shoppers to relax, with grass, flower beds and flowering cherry trees. Since the building of Castle Mall

and particularly since the installation of the Castle lift they have lost their appeal. Entering from the gate by the Shire Hall there is a scruffy neglected look. The gates and fence are in need of paint, the notice board is dirty and has graffiti and stickers, and the bed in which it stands is full of weeds - hardly a welcoming entrance. Inside the steps leading up the bank are full of litter and leaves and the one time Victorian gardens on the bank are overgrown with nettles and weeds. The Whiffler Theatre is in good condition but the day we visited the terraces needed sweeping. The litter bins were overflowing, remains of stickers on the lamp posts, graffiti on a door by the bridge, and the Diana Memorial stone looked dirty and uncared for as did the steps up to the Castle. Again the red Castle sign at the Castle Meadow entrance was dirty though the Discover Norwich was in good order. The 'Teddy bear' flower bed sponsored by a children's charity which had been nicely planted had been trampled all over and had lost its shape and the grass in which it is set had been worn away.



Damage to Caslel Gardens flower bed

Once again we have to point out that nothing has been done to remedy the slippage on the mound between Castle Meadow and the bridge, and although the lift has been repaired graffiti has only been partially removed.

Suggestions for improvement - The Castle Gardens were a priority of the City Centre SNAP in 2007 for intimidating behaviour. At the latest SNAP meeting on August 11 the Castle Mall Gardens were still a priority

because of anti-social behaviour so the problem is clearly under review. The upper Castle Green is clean and pleasant and used by all ages so why the difference here? Is the scruffy environment the result of those who use it or does the scruffiness attract a certain undesirable element? It was noticeable that while we were visiting, there was no sign of any attendant/keeper or other form of supervision. See the comments in the overall review section above

3. Chapelbreak Open Space - Harpsfield, Bowthorpe

This small park surrounds the 'Village Hall', Chapelbreak, Bowthorpe and seems designed for neighbourhood use and is not easily located by visitors. The park appears to be run in conjunction with the activities of the Village Hall and the adjacent fenced children's play area provides a playground for the play groups using the hall. Behind the hall, car park and playground is a field surrounded by trees and shrubs for casual ball games.

There is no internal signage, no benches, and no toilets. Litter bins are sited beside the village hall and no litter on the ground however there is a problem: though the park is supposed to be dog free this is probably unenforceable and the only litter we noticed was a plastic bag which appeared to contain dog dirt. Had a proper receptacle been provided we feel it would have been used.

The park is well kept and we formed a good overall impression.

4. Chapelfield Gardens - City Centre

This is an historic open space forming a delightful park in the heart of the city. It is a triangular site with avenues of mature trees along each boundary and two magnificent plane trees as well as other interesting species of trees in the centre of the park. There is a charming band stand (recently repainted) attractive flower beds, an original sculpture and facility for outdoor chess and a level area for petanque. Also a well equipped play area for small children, and also contains a privately run

restaurant. It is good that some of the sunflowers from the pagoda which once stood in the park have been preserved in the entrance gates from Chapelfield East.



Chapelfield gates

The garden forms a pedestrian and cycle route into the city centre so is always busy and is well used by all ages relaxing in the gardens. The toilets were adequate and as clean as is possible considering the rough state of walls and floor. There were plenty of litter bins and no litter on the ground. Some graffiti on the rear wall of the café. The café is always manned during the day so someone is on site though we saw no sign of a park attendant/keeper. It is not locked at night and there have been anti-social behaviour problems here in the past but because it is so pleasant and so busy it does not feel uncomfortable to be here during the day.

Suggestions for improvement - little to criticise here. It is a delightful park, well used and well maintained though the toilets could be better.

5. St Clements Park - Woodcock Road

This is a small open grass field. There are no parking facilities and no park information boards though there is a community notice board by the entrance. There is a small swing and climbing area for toddlers/ juniors in the centre of the field. A litter bin by the entrance and no ground litter. No toilet facilities. The park is clean and well maintained.

6. Earlham Park - University Drive, Earlham Road.



Earlham: River

Earlham Hall Park was bought by the City in 1925 and in 1932 a golf course was laid out which ultimately became the site for the University of East Anglia. The remaining eighty eight acres survive as a large, mainly natural park but containing the outbuildings and formal gardens of the Hall. The Hall itself has been leased to the University since 1962. The park is approached either from the Earlham Road through impressive iron gates or from the car park off the adjacent service road to the adjoining UEA, which although well sign-posted and well masked by mature trees was badly flooded at the entrance at the time of our visit. Information boards direct you to the park facilities.

The park exudes an air of calm and wide open space with a pleasant vista across open grassland past the very well maintained Dovecote, down to the banks of the River Yare. The park merges into the grounds of the University and the open park area can be hired for large open air events such as fireworks parties, or classical or pop concerts with ample car parking on the grassland. There is a staffed café in a functional single story building. Open from 9.30 - 4.30, but closed on Monday and Thursday, and is popular with families. At the time of our visit the out-buildings and court yard behind the Hall were in very poor condition, the buildings being roofless and surrounded by security fencing because of their

seriously dilapidated condition.



Earlham: outbuildings

Leading from the courtyard area is the entrance to the formal gardens. The herbaceous borders were not particularly well tended and the formal rose garden is a shadow of its former self although once again it has an air of faded opulence and calm. The formal garden leads into the Rock Garden which regrettably has been allowed to be overshadowed by trees; there was much litter in evidence.



Earlham rockery

The Knot Garden beside the Hall, formalised by neat box hedges and a herb garden lacks care and adequate planting. We felt that in the right hands the formal gardens could once again be a popular attraction. The moles were much in evidence on the front lawn of the Hall and the Ha-ha was heavily overgrown with nettles. At the time of our visit the park was busy with all manner of activities and people simply relaxing and enjoying the great outdoors. The river frontage was particularly popular for bathers and fishermen. The grassland was neat, tidy and well tended. No evidence of litter or dog fouling.

Suggested improvements: drainage needs to be improved at the entrance to the car park.

A solution is needed for the outbuildings at the rear of the Hall, some of which are of some historical importance.

The standard of care of the formal gardens could be better and litter needs clearing from the Rock Garden.

7. Eaton Park - South Park Avenue

This is the largest of the Sandys-Winsch Parks opened in 1928 and recently refurbished with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is a large well maintained park divided to provide areas for different recreational activities. Near the entrance is a large circular formal rose garden with a central water feature, not operating when we visited. An avenue of trees leads to the arcaded circle of the pavilion with central bandstand and cafe, and a second avenue beyond. To the south is the lily pond, and beyond this the model boating lake and club house.

Recreational facilities cater for all ages and include football pitches, a skate park, pitch and putt, a large fenced mowed area with four grass tennis courts, bowling greens, a cycle speedway track, very well equipped children's playground, the model train circuit belonging to the Norwich and District model Engineers and the model boating lake.



Eaton playground

On the Sunday afternoon of our visit the litter bins were empty and there was no litter on the ground, and the central buildings were clean and free of graffiti. The condition of the ladies toilets was acceptable, tiles and floor clean and

paintwork in fair condition. Clearly there have been problems with vandalism as the glass doors of the café have metal screens but these have metal water lily flowers and leaves fixed to them which makes a very attractive feature.



Eaton café

There are information boards at the North Park Avenue entrance advertising many activities in the park and also giving details of the Friends of Eaton Park. There is also a map of the Park by the pavilion.

General Maintenance is very good. The flower gardens are well planted and cared for, grass cut, play equipment well maintained, and obviously great efforts are made to keep the pavilion buildings clean and free from graffiti. This is most successful and a pleasing change from when our committee members visited at the time the refurbishment was beginning. The maintenance staff do a superb job but credit must also go to the Friends of Eaton Park and the local community who are helping to combat vandalism and making sure there are events and activities in the park as a notice by the gate testifies. There was no attendant/keeper in evidence when we were there but the café is manned and the park is mostly well used though it was surprising that the tennis courts were empty on an August Sunday afternoon.

Suggested improvements - though the park is so well maintained it is a shame that the main gates from North Park Avenue are rusty with peeling paint and the 'welcome' boards are very dirty and need repainting. The water feature in the Rose Garden was not operating and some of the tiles are chipped which spoils

this otherwise delightful garden. These are small criticisms of what is a very well maintained park.

8. Harford Park - Ipswich Road

This is a nice size park with a Community Centre which has some car parking. There were no entrance signs for the park but the whole site was reasonably well kept. There were litter bins which were used but not overflowing though there was some evidence of litter on the ground. No toilet facilities in the park and the Community Centre was closed at time of our visit though would appear to be in regular use, according to the notices.

In the children's play area the junior section is adequate but no safe area for toddlers.

The bowling green is in excellent condition.

The games area and the cycle speedway track are reasonably well kept & both have floodlights.



Harford cycle speedway

The tennis hard courts are in good condition, but some litter. There is also a petanque court, but no evidence how often this is used. Informal 5-a-side football area does not seem to be much used. Maintenance is good with good metalled paths and grass and trees well maintained with some new trees. The area in the north west corner of the park with the graffiti wall is in poor condition. There was no evidence of an attendant/ keeper when visited.

Suggestions for improvements - Improve and tidy area to north west. Improve toddler's play facilities. Signage needed on Ipswich Road approaches.

9. Heigham Park - The Avenues

This is one of the historic parks created by Sandys-Winsch in the 1920s and recently refurbished with aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is a delightful park in a residential area and well used and enjoyed by all ages. The sunflower gates at the entrance make it feel special immediately and a walk around does not disappoint. The circular area with attractive stone seats and central bed is a pleasant place to sit, there are well planted flower borders, rockery, and a long pergola covered with climbers and mature trees around the perimeter of the site.



Heigham pergola

Recreational facilities include two bowling greens, ten grass tennis courts, a practice football goal post and an excellent fenced children's playground well equipped for small and older children, the two areas separate but within the same enclosure. There is also a bowls pavilion.

There is no designated parking but some space outside the gates. Toilet facilities basic, floor wet and paintwork poor. Plenty of litter bins, all empty and no litter on the ground.

Information boards at the entrance include a map and notices to keep dogs on a lead and no cycling. When visited there was an attendant on site collecting fees for the tennis courts and walking around the site. He said the park is locked at night but this does not deter those determined to get in.

The gardens are very well maintained. The long borders are full of perennial plants, the central bed is colourful and the pergola covered with a variety of climbers, also shrubs and mature

trees on site.

Suggestions for improvement - the toilets could be better but otherwise this would seem the ideal park, plenty of activity for all ages, attractive gardens, well maintained and well used.

10. Jubilee Park - Long John Hill

This is an airy, open park, medium size, sharing the site with a community centre which has thirteen parking spaces including two disabled. There were no information boards apart from an emergency sign with directions to the nearest phone box, and when visited the community centre was closed so a hand-written notice directed to toilets at nearby Lakenham Recreation Ground.

There are good, well maintained facilities for children with a fenced off toddler area plus equipment for older children including a large metal slide.



Jubilee Park slide

A good floodlit hard surface games area for five-a-side and basketball in good condition and a large open games field with overhead pulley run and 'adventure play' area where teenagers were playing at time of visit.

General maintenance is good though a fence to the north of the toddler area was damaged and the area to the right of the Long John Hill entrance was untended and littered. There are three litter bins by the main area which looked as though they are emptied regularly, though none by the games area. A little litter evident on the ground. No evidence of an attendant/park keeper.

Suggestions for improvement - Clear and tidy

(and plant) area adjacent to entrance and car park. Repair fence by toddler area.

11. Mousehold Heath Gurney Road

This is a large area of heath and woodland well used for enjoying walking and wildlife and is under the care of the Mousehold Conservators. Three areas where the visitor facilities are located were visited.

a) **Gurney Road** A large grassed area opposite Zaks with a bandstand, two football goal posts for adults and teenagers, one picnic table, 3 benches. There are no toilets on this side of Gurney Road but those at Zaks are nearby, three litter bins by football pitches, a small parking area with good information board about the historical aspects of the heath and the whole site is clean and well maintained and is very well used.

b) **Zaks originally** built as changing rooms for the sports field, now a restaurant. The area in front has room for car parking, good information board, six benches and toilet which could be cleaner. Provides access to the walking and wildlife areas of the heath.

c) **Pitch and Putt course.**

This covers a large area and consists of an eighteen hole golf course primarily for adults. No facilities for children. Parking facilities on the opposite side of Gurney Road.

The course is not very clearly signposted and is not easy to find though there is an information board at the start of the course. The course is well laid out and maintained, the greens being cut regularly and there is an attendant in the central compound. There are litter bins throughout the course and no ground litter. The toilets in the hire block are in need of refurbishment. The course is well used.

Suggestions for improvement: bring the toilets up to standard, particularly those by the pitch and putt.

12. Lea Bridges Park - Coleburn Road

This is a long narrow park, medium to large, mainly an expanse of grass and trees between the railway and backs of houses on Coleburn

Road. It is difficult, nearly impossible to find, there being no signage on the road and accessible only up a narrow metalled path. At the north end are games and play areas.



Lea Bridges play area

There is no parking area, no toilet facilities and no information boards. The games area, which is not floodlit as stated in the Norwich City council brochure, is in relatively good condition but does not seem to be used very much. One dilapidated soccer goal and five-a-side goals further on. The play area is adequate but no real facilities for toddlers. One litter bin by the games area, very little litter and general maintenance is good. No evidence of attendant/keeper. The general impression is that this park is not very well used, except by some locals, could this be because it is so difficult to find?

Suggestions for improvement - good signage at both ends, improved facilities for toddlers.

13. Sloughbottom Park - Drayton Road

This park was formed from open fields as part of the unemployment scheme of the 1930s, and was opened in 1932 as Hellesdon Recreation Ground. It was renamed Sloughbottom in 1959.¹ It is a large area, mostly level functional sports grounds. As well as field sports there are areas for tennis, netball and children's amusements. A second enclosed play area is located in a bulge in the otherwise square park where it leads to a surfaced way to Vale Green. At the end farthest from the road is a large well maintained BMX track. This was installed by

Norwich Fliers BMX Club in partnership with Norwich City Council with funds obtained primarily from Barclays 'Space for Sport' - an example of how funds can be unlocked by independent groups working in partnership with the local authority.

There is a clear sign at the entrance, also a community notice board for such things as a local walking group. There is an ample car park and provision for dog walkers.

At its furthest point the park is well linked into the Marriots Way network of footpaths and cycle tracks although there is no signage that says this is so. Although the gates to the park are locked at night the park is readily accessible by walking round them and from the other access points from Marriots Way and Vale Green. There is floodlighting in the netball area and street lighting in the path to Vale Green, but the BMX facilities appear to be for daytime use only.

An interesting feature is a neo-classical central pavilion and terrace. Sadly the pavilion, which is of a similar quality to those recently restored in some of the Sandys Wunsch parks, is not in use and boarded up.



Sloughbottom pavilion

It appears to be in reasonable condition though does suffer from vandalism. It contains toilets which are normally in use but were temporarily closed at the time of our visit; consequently we were not able to inspect them. It is regrettable that such structures should be so plagued by vandalism that they have to be moth-balled. We look forward to the day when normal social values are restored and they can be reopened. In the meantime we should do everything in our

¹ Goreham, op. cit.

power to encourage the council to retain them rather than abandon them.

Litter bins are placed at regular intervals and there was no litter on the ground. The overall impression is that the park is well maintained and popular.

14. Waterloo Park - Angel Road/Aylsham Road.

This is one of the historically important parks of Norwich. The site was acquired in 1897 from the Great Hospital Trust and was opened as a park in 1904², but was developed and the buildings erected to the designs of Sandys-Winsch in the 1930s. Having gradually fallen into disrepair it was refurbished with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund around 2000.

It is a very good medium to large sized park with some fine buildings, particularly the pavilion and bandstand, hard landscaping and well kept flower borders. The long border has always been a feature of the park. There are good recreational facilities for all ages including a bowling green, tennis courts, an informal football area and an excellent children's play area including a large paddling pool, though little specifically for toddlers. There is car parking at the north east end of the park and two sets of toilets, one in the side of Pavilion where the ladies was clean though the gents was not so good, and the other by the play area. Litter bins provided and very little litter on the ground. There are two main information boards at the entrances with contact telephone numbers.

The general maintenance of the park is very good and the buildings appeared in good condition though it was sad to see that the pavilion was closed and shuttered and there was little evidence that it is being used. When the Environment Committee visited the park shortly after the refurbishment it was a thriving venue for various groups and activities. There was no evidence of an attendant/keeper at the time of our visit.



Waterloo Park borders

Suggestions for improvement - It is known that there has been anti-social behaviour in this park and clearly this has presented problems but it seems sad that local residents should be denied access to the facilities in the Pavilion as a result of this. A permanent, visible presence of someone in authority would seem the only hope, but where will the finance come from?

15. Wensum Park - Drayton Road

This is one of the historic Parks of Norwich designed by Sandys-Winsch. The riverside site was bought by the Corporation in 1907 and a swimming pool, children's bathing pool and wading pool were built but it was not until 1921 that the park was fully developed, providing work for unemployed men³. The main gates, viewing terrace and attached steps and pergola were designed by Sandys-Winsch and are now listed Grade Two.⁴ Over the years the park deteriorated and was refurbished recently with aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This is now a large wildlife park with the emphasis on natural features and is the only city park to have a large expanse of natural water in it. The swimming pool no longer exists but children paddle on tiered steps by the riverside, which also has a chicken wire covered boardwalk. There is also a large circular children's paddling pool and a large ground maze has replaced a large central flower bed. There is a safe bridge over a dyke with lifebuoys available, a fenced picnic area with

² Goreham op. cit.

³ Anderson, op. cit

⁴ Anderson, op. cit

two picnic tables next to the River Wensum also a fenced/hedged junior play area with slides and swings.



Wensum Park picnic area

The play equipment is in good condition and is well used. The more natural management means the site is ideal for wildlife and there were many butterflies when we visited. There was no keeper/attendant in evidence when we visited.

There are plenty of litter bins and no ground litter and good well maintained public toilets including facilities for the disabled, sadly the pergola is full of graffiti but otherwise the whole site is well maintained and well used

16. Sewell Park - St Clements Hill

This park is a memorial to Phillip Edward Sewell and was opened in 1909⁵. It was decided not to do a full survey of this park as it is about to be improved following consultation with the local community however in its present state it is clean, well maintained and litter free.

17. Jenny Lind Park - Vauxhall Street

This park was developed on waste ground as a replacement for the Jenny Lind Playground in Pottergate and the entrance gate from there has been re-erected as the entrance to the present playground. It was decided not to do a full survey of this park as it is about to be improved following consultation with the local community. Currently the grass is well maintained though the rose beds are sparse, and there is no litter. With the exception of new basket ball posts the equipment is sorely in need of updating.

18. Bowthorpe Park, Clover Hill.

This is a relatively new park created to serve the residents of the new development at Clover Hill, and contains approximately six to eight acres. A single story building contains the clubhouse facilities and immediately behind are a series of ten fenced five-a-side football pitches and adjacent, a fenced bowling green, immaculately presented and at the time of our visit being carefully groomed by a member of staff. These are in turn surrounded by the park proper which apart from sculptured open areas includes netball facilities, an 'open access' pair of tennis courts (one of which had no net or posts), a full sized football pitch and a wild area, being largely enclosed by a dense belt of trees which also serves to mask the background roar of traffic.



Bowthorpe trees

There are no information boards other than one at the entrance reading 'Power League. Powered by X Box' the clubhouse and fenced pitches are operated by a Paisley based Company who staff the facility. The building is a spacious, fully equipped, staffed clubhouse with games, bar, relaxation and function facilities. There is a generous surfaced car park and toilet facilities are only available when the clubhouse is open.

Litter bins are sited at regular intervals across the park and the bins and grounds are maintained by City Care. The car park was being used at the time of our visit by the mobile Library and the footpath through the park, which is lit at night, was in continuous use and children were playing on the sculptured slopes and netball facility. The whole area was very well presented, clean and tidy.

⁵ Goreham, op. cit

19. Heartsease Towers - Sale Road

This is a medium size park with facilities for various games. No on site parking. There is a sand filled toddler play area, a bark filled play area for older children and a junior play area with swings, slides etc. Also a fenced basket ball pitch and skateboarding facilities and a small neatly kept wooded area.

There are no public toilets though there is a locked building and a sports hall on site. There are three litter bins and the site is mostly litter free. The whole site is well maintained.

20. Lakenham Recreation Ground - City Road

This is a small park, concealed behind a long Victorian brick wall, the only signage being inside the park on the bowls club hut. No on site parking. There are no facilities for small children however there is a bowling green, said to be used by two clubs, two hard and three grass tennis courts.. There is a small pavilion for the bowling green, good metalled paths and a grass border. All is well maintained except the north border.



Little to indicate a park behind the wall

There are ladies and gents toilets which are adequate and reasonably clean and there were five litter bins around the park with little in them and no litter on the ground. When visited there were two gardeners on site but no evidence of an attendant though there is a maintenance office by the entrance for staff responsible for all the Norwich parks children's play areas.

Suggestions for improvement - better signage outside the park and improvement/planting of

the border at the north end of the park.

21. Woodrow Pilling Park - Harvey Lane/ Pilling Park Road.

This park was opened in 1929 as a playground for young people and was a memorial gift given by Mrs Mary Pilling in memory of her father Jeremiah Woodrow. There was a pavilion designed by Sandys-Winsch.⁶

It is a large green field site with a designated car parking area and a community centre within the site. There are information boards at each entrance.

The main field site has facilities for cricket and football, also an enclosed court for basketball, a skateboard area and BMX dirt track. There are well maintained junior and toddler play areas. Adequate litter bins are provided and no ground litter. The site is well maintained.

22. Alderman Walker Park - Frere Road

The park appears to have been absorbed into the Heartsease Primary School site. The school gates were locked.

23. Britannia Barracks - Britannia Road

Large well mown grass area used for football/cricket. There is a locked building presumably with changing rooms. No play areas or other facilities. There are two litter bins and the site is clean and well maintained. No surrounding fence and no information boards.

24. James Stuart Gardens - Recorder Road.

This is a small city centre garden enclosed by walls and hedges, and with an imposing brick arched entrance, dated 1919. Under this arch are plaques commemorating that the donor, Laura Elizabeth Stuart, gave the garden in memory of her husband James Stuart M.A. LID Privy Councillor of Carrow Abbey. A second plaque states 'the building of this gateway delayed by the Great War was completed in 1922 under the bequest of Laura Elizabeth Stuart OBE. A member of Norwich City Council and the first woman JP for the city'.

⁶ Goreham, op. cit.

There are fine mature chestnut trees, a small grassed area, paths and formal flower gardens, With almshouses and retirement flats close by it resembles a 'garden square'. It is clearly intended for older people with no recreation facilities and a large sign banning ball games. No car parking and no toilets though the building attached to the entrance arch may have had toilets when built, now locked. When visited the garden was litter free and the bins were empty. There was no evidence of an attendant /keeper during our visit. The fine ironwork entrance gates are rusty and in need of paint otherwise the general maintenance of the garden is very good, tidy and well planted. It is a wonderful peaceful haven away from the city bustle. Unfortunately the fine mature horse chestnut trees are all showing signs of the leaf wilt which is affecting this species

Suggestions for improvement - it seems likely the chestnut trees are nearing the end of their lives so some replanting of trees to anticipate this event would be a good idea. Repainting the gates to preserve them from rust.

25. Mile Cross Gardens - Aylsham Road

Two small open spaces of approximately an acre each which were developed by Sandys-Winsch in 1925 to form the entrance to the Mile Cross Estate. The two sides are arranged symmetrically on either side of the road. The condition of these gardens was the low point of our tour. When they were created by Sandys- Wunsch they were a delightful local amenity. The two halves mirrored each other. In each a neo-classical entrance pavilion once led into a pergola covered with roses

surrounding a bowls green. These were surrounded concentrically by herbaceous borders, yew hedges and railings. A heritage board by the Northern half commemorates their distinguished origins and tells us they are on the English Nature Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The pavilions survive though all accesses have had to be filled in. Of the pergolas only some of the stone pediments survive, though we understand the columns were removed for safe keeping by the city council. The bowls greens have long since disappeared. In the North garden there are some children's rides where the bowls green once was. One large swing seemed very popular and was in continuous use. The south garden has a seat and two litter bins.

We should admire the genuine efforts made by some of the local community to fight for these gardens. Though very disappointed that these gardens were excluded from the lottery bid which benefited the other historic parks they have formed a 'Friends of the Mile Cross Gardens' to try to improve matters and have placed a 'Welcome' notice board to publicise their existence. . An illustrated presentation by the local school is headed 'Mile Cross South Garden is Wildlife Friendly' and hope for these gardens seems to rest with this local community involvement.

Suggestions for improvement: local residents would like to see these gardens restored in line with the work carried out in the other Sandys Wunsch parks with restoration of at least one of the pavilions so it could be reopened to sell refreshments during the day.

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